

Inspection of Stepgates Community School

Stepgates, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 8HT

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Stepgates Community School is a deeply caring and inclusive school. Pupils flourish here because leaders and teachers know them as individuals and have high expectations for all. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are polite and respectful. Leaders work closely with the local community and develop strong, trusted partnerships with parents. Staff work well together with a common ambition to help pupils to feel happy and safe.

Pupils know that everyone is welcome at this school. They are highly respectful of each other and of adults. Pupils understand what bullying is. They say it rarely happens. Staff deal with any issues quickly and fairly. Pupils have positive relationships with staff and know they can share any worries.

Pupils' personal development is a top priority for leaders and all staff. Each year there is a whole-school trip, most recently to Windsor. Pupils raise money for charities and learn about the world beyond their own community. Special events like the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) workshop inspire pupils to give back and appreciate those that volunteer in the service.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

In almost all subjects, leaders have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum. Leaders have developed a curriculum that is meaningful and engaging for pupils. Many subjects are planned well and pupils develop their knowledge securely. Teachers routinely check pupils' knowledge and understanding, and curriculum thinking provides clear guidance for staff. However, in some subjects, the curriculum is not planned as well. As a result, teachers do not emphasise the most important content and so pupils do not develop their knowledge as securely in these subjects.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. Leaders and staff identify, plan and adapt activities suitably to cater for pupils' needs. This includes those who attend the specialist resource base. Staff in the specialist resource base provision provide highly effective support. They tailor the curriculum precisely around these pupils' complex needs and ensure that they are involved in every part of school life.

Leaders have established a positive and orderly environment. Pupils behave exceptionally well. They demonstrate high levels of self-control and consideration for each other. They follow clear and consistent routines. Pupils play well together, learning to take turns and to listen to each other.

Children in the early years settle well into routines. Adults ensure that activities and resources are well planned. They guide children's learning and they check learning

through careful questioning. Children develop a strong understanding of mathematics, for example when separating odd and even numbers. Children work independently and with others. They are keen to learn. They are well prepared for the next stage of their learning.

Teachers waste no time in getting phonics teaching underway in Nursery. Staff provide appropriate extra support for any pupils who are not on track with their reading. Staff foster a love of stories from children's very first days. Pupils' reading is prioritised throughout the school.

Leaders have designed a personal development curriculum based on collaboration, resilience, integrity, compassion and courage. Pupils learn to be respectful and take pride in their achievements. They learn to celebrate the diversity and values of modern Britain. Teachers encourage pupils to think about the world from different points of view. Pupils enjoy a wide range of well-planned activities and experiences. They take part in many clubs.

Leaders have been unswerving in their ambition and determination to improve the quality of education. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a factor in some pupils not regularly attending school. However, the attendance of many pupils is still far too low. This means that pupils are missing out on crucial learning.

Leaders have created a culture of collaboration. Staff embrace the opportunities that leaders provide and are proud to work at this school. Governors know their school well and they provide high-quality support and challenge. Many parents and carers would recommend this school to another parent. One parent summed up the view of many when they said: 'We are lucky to have such a fantastic local school, full of wonderful staff!'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school.

Staff are well trained and know how to report any concerns they may have. They receive regular high-quality safeguarding training. Leaders keep accurate safeguarding records. They take swift action to get pupils the help that they may need to keep safe from harm. Leaders work effectively with external agencies.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online and in the community. They know who they can speak to in school if they have any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the curriculum does not identify, with precision, the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn. As a result, some pupils are overwhelmed with too much content. Leaders should refine the curriculum to make clear the important knowledge that pupils need to learn and remember in all subjects.
- The attendance of many pupils is too low. This means that pupils are missing too much of their education. Leaders should ensure that they strengthen their work with parents and carers so that that pupils' attendance improves, and they access the full curriculum offer.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 125122 |
| Local authority | Surrey |
| Inspection number | 10268707 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 284 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Michael Pope |
| Headteacher | Tara Ford |
| Website | www.stepgateschool.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 29 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school has a specialist resource base provision for pupils with speech, language, and communication needs. Currently, 18 pupils attend this provision. They spend time in mainstream classes as well as attending lessons and therapy sessions in the specialist provision.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school runs a Nursery which has provision for two-year-olds.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other school leaders, governors including the chair of governors and local authority representatives.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education, computing and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements in the school through document checks, including the checks that leaders make on staff's suitability to work with children. Inspectors checked that staff implement safeguarding policies and procedures effectively across the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers from responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including free-text responses, and spoke to several parents before school on the first day of inspection.
- Inspectors met with a range of staff to gather their views about the school and took account of staff's responses to Ofsted's confidential staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally. They spoke to pupils about their learning and experiences at school. The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, published information about pupils' performance and minutes of governing body meetings.

Inspection team

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|------------------------------|------------------|
| Ginny Rhodes, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Alison Ashcroft | Ofsted Inspector |
| Debra Anderson | Ofsted Inspector |

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